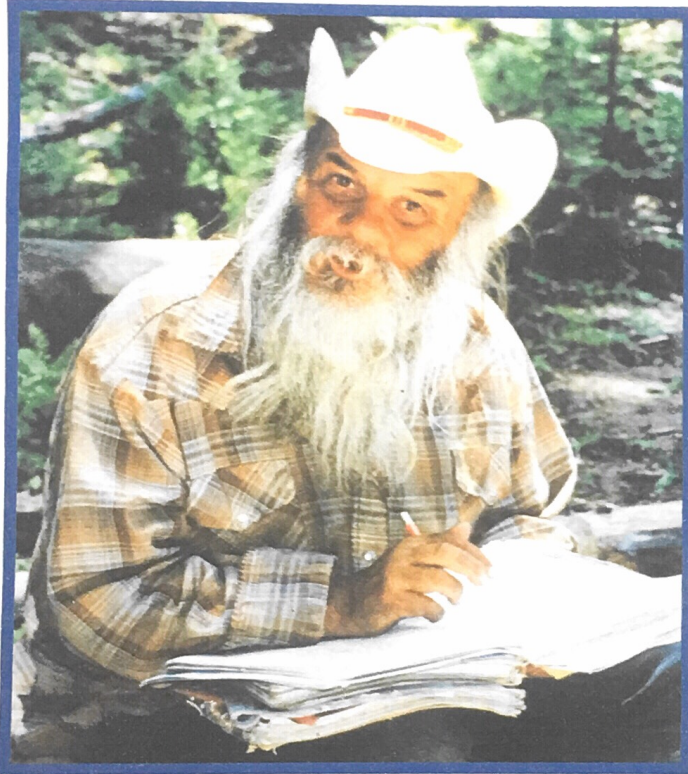




Rainbow Family

Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

Scanned in 2018.

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14.A JANE HOWE - "A Chunk Out of Time"

4 pages

[14.A]

Jane was not involved in Rainbow, but she helped the networks of transient youth function which later evolved into Rainbow. She was born in Saint Louis in 1915 and grew up in California. She lived with her mother in Norman, Oklahoma, for over ten years and traveled widely in the Southwest doing research on Spanish mission bells, on which she is the leading authority. For most of her life she was a registered Republican. One day in 1968, after her mother went to an old folks' home, Jane decided she would become a hippie. She was observing the anti-war demonstrations at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago when the police injured her.]

Jane - A Chunk Out of Time

I first took in crashers in the last week of February, 1969. In time, I took in over 600 crashers - people who stayed here at least one night. Then some local young people lived here. I would have runaways come stay three or four days before I told them to leave. My last crasher came in February, 1972. It was a cut-off at the end of exactly three years.

I don't know how they started coming. It started spreading by word of mouth... That's not quite true. I read in the underground press about crash pads and I decided that was what I was going to do. I didn't know anything about the hippie scene in Norman.

I met up with a travelling salesman and I asked him, "Do you meet up with any of those long-haired hitch-hikers?" and he said, "Yes." So I told him, "Bring one of them by here if you pick one up."

So he came to me and said, "Jane, I've got one, but he's going to freak you out." I said, "Bring him by. And he brought by Dan Mc Cawland. He was a field man for Liberation News Service [which put out news packets for the underground press.] I don't know which was scared more, him or me. I took him down to Galveston to meet his wife to discuss that meeting in Austin which was coming up [The April, 1969 National Council meeting of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS)]

Other than that, it was all word of mouth. I had kids come by who had heard of me in Nevada and Louisiana. By the middle of 1970, the police were bringing hitchhikers by here.

The local kids who came and stayed here—it was like one girl told her mother, "She lets us do anything we want as long as we don't use drugs in her house."

I went to a pop festival in Denver in the last of June of '69, then I went to a commune in New Mexico. An Aztec Indian from Mexico named Luis was there. He told me to go back to my crash pad and let it evolve.

I decided from the beginning that these wandering kids were going to have something to eat and a safe place to stay like when one boy asked me if he could take off his pants when he went to sleep on a pallet on the floor. I never realized what that meant before. These kids slept in their clothes because they never knew when they might have to get up and leave.

The stories some of these kids would tell about how the cops treated them in their travels—even the girls. After I heard them talking to each other about it, I would go in another room and cry. It was like something you'd expect in some other country—Mexico or France—but not the United States.

The boys from factory families—I gave up trying to understand them or get them into my world. All I could do was just give them food and shelter. They really appreciated that—also not getting a beating every night. I couldn't believe that still happened in this day and age.

I decided I was going to stay out of the politics. I knew nothing about it. One guy told me the FBI was after him for something political. I said, "I didn't hear what you said." He said, "That's good." All I could do was give love.

Of course the political scene still exists. If they went back into Vietnam, they'd find out how "quiet" the campuses are. But be that as it may... I stayed out of the political scene although I was interested.

When did that song, "She's Leaving Home," by the Beatles come out? Psychologists say there were three songs that got the kids on the road—that one and "When You're Going to San Francisco

Wear a flower in your hair" and Bob Dylan's "Rolling Stone." It was "She's Leaving Home" that brought the girls out. Before that, there weren't very many of them on the road. After that song came out in April, 1967, girls were on the road in hordes. The songs did it.

Also they thought when they were out on the road, no one could check on them. So many of them came and stopped here in Oklahoma, the edge of the desert - they didn't know if they could get to California.

I'd take boys and girls - runaways from 14 to 17 out on the highway to hitch after they'd stayed here. I'd point to the west. I'd say, "Look. Out that way, as far as you can see, you don't see a house or a real tree. Further on that way is desert till California. You'll have to stand in the heat till you get a ride, maybe two or three days. If you get a ride, they may beat you up and let you out in the middle of nowhere."

If they still wanted to go on, they did. If not, I took them to Oklahoma University. There were some fraternity boys and sorority girls - not much older than the runaways. They had a place they'd put them up and they'd suggest that they call their parents.

A lot of them called their parents on their own from my house. If I had the telephone bills still - some of them were horrendous. There was one of these girls who was a senator's daughter.

Young people were trying to live out what they had been taught in Sunday School. My cousin said, "Just wait till they get married and have kids. They'll change." I said, "Some of them already are married and have kids. They're trying to be Christians even if they don't worship Christ."

As for drugs, I found out about it only gradually. People protected me from knowing about it. Awareness came when I was ready for it. I found some kids had been shooting up in my house. I put a sign on my door - NO DRUGS, NO HOLDING. I didn't have any more problems. People protected me - getting down to practical things, leaving out the flower child and love scene - because they needed me if they wanted to have a place where people with

no place could crash. It would be no good if I went to prison for having drugs in my house.

Dope didn't hold that movement together. Music did and it still does. Every politician, even Oklahoma Senator Bellmon, admits the turning point in American politics came with Bob Dylan.

Numbers, just numbers, make a difference. There weren't as many teenagers or young people back when I was growing up. They weren't as big a proportion of the population. If they had been, all of us would have been freaks in the Thirties because the country was in turmoil then. We would have blown this country apart.

People in their forties think it's all over, but look how many spin-offs have come from things people were fighting for in the Sixties. Who would have thought that Norman would have a Rape Crisis center you can call at anytime? Or day care centers like Wonder House? Or a place for kids in trouble to go here instead of calling them juvenile delinquents and sending them to reform school? At least for some of them.

Don't ask me why the crash pad stopped all of a sudden. I don't know. It was like this was the end of it, just as it started. It was a chunk out of time.

[Five months after Jane's crash pad ended, the first Rainbow Gathering was held in Colorado. She had moved from Oklahoma.]